



## Teen of Impact Key Messages 2026

The following key messages have been developed to support your campaign as a Teen of Impact™ nominee. If you have any additional questions, please reach out to your local American Heart Association contact.

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#### **Teen of Impact Narrative**

(9-week blind competition engaging teens to make an impact. February 6 – April 9)

**Teen of Impact challenges teens to lead with purpose and create meaningful change in their communities.**

Take action for heart health by bringing awareness of warning signs and risks while raising critical funds for lifesaving research, advocacy and education.

#### **Your voice. Your team. Your impact.**

Over a nine-week competition, nominees build Impact Teams, set bold goals and take action — raising awareness and funds for lifesaving research, advocacy and education. The nominee who makes the greatest local impact is named their city's Teen of Impact and the top nominee nationwide earns the title of American Heart Association's National Teen of Impact Winner.

#### **This is your moment. Own it.**

The future of heart health starts with you. Step up. Speak out. Be the next Teen of Impact.

#### **Teen of Impact Key Messages**

- [Teen of Impact](#) brings the work of the American Heart Association to life in communities across the country fighting the No. 1 killer, cardiovascular disease.
- For too long, cardiovascular disease (CVD) has been thought to only affect older generations. The reality is that heart disease and stroke can affect anyone at any age.

- By age 18, many adolescents have already developed heart disease risk factors, such as high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol or Type 2 diabetes, and a growing number of younger adults are experiencing adverse cardiovascular events.<sup>1</sup>
- Each year, more than 23,000 children under 18 experience cardiac arrest. 40% of children's cardiac arrests are related to sports. That's why the American Heart Association is working to give more schools the tools they need to learn Hands-Only CPR.
- Each nominee gets the chance to make a direct impact on their community. They do things like learning and sharing the lifesaving skill of Hands-Only CPR, promoting physical health and mental well-being, and advocating for healthy policies that can save lives.

## Key Issues

The following key messages have been provided to help you talk about key issues that Teen of Impact nominees support during the campaign.

### American Heart Association Research

- The American Heart Association is one of the largest and most trusted research programs in the nation, funding more than \$6 billion in heart disease and stroke research since 1949.
- The many American Heart Association-funded discoveries include the first implantable pacemakers, the first artificial heart valve, CPR techniques and cholesterol-lowering medications.
- The research findings made possible by the American Heart Association are translated into guidelines which give healthcare providers the medical advancements and knowledge they need to most effectively treat cardiovascular and cerebrovascular illnesses.
- As the largest non-profit source of funding for cardiovascular disease and cerebrovascular research next to the federal government, the American Heart Association is committed to funding cutting-edge science and building careers in science and research impacting every aspect of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular prevention and treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> HYPERLINK "<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001256>" Forecasting the Burden of Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke in the United States Through 2050—Prevalence of Risk Factors and Disease: A Presidential Advisory From the American Heart Association | Circulation [ahajournals.org]

## **Mental Well-Being**

- Higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol are linked to increased risk of high blood pressure and cardiovascular events, like heart disease and stroke. That's why the American Heart Association prioritizes [mental health and well-being](#).
- Physical activity keeps your mind sharp now – and later. Studies show that higher fitness levels are linked to better attention, learning, working memory and problem solving.
- Breathing directly affects your nervous and cardiovascular systems. Taking slow, deep breaths can trigger positive responses in your body like:
  - Lowering blood pressure
  - Creating a sense of calm
  - Reducing anxiety and depression symptoms

## **Equitable Health**

- The American Heart Association and community leaders are working to remove barriers, change policy and increase health access for historically excluded communities.
- American Heart Association funding to investigators from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in science has more than doubled over the past five years.
- [STEM Goes Red](#) supports female students by introducing them to careers with in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. A new generation of female scientists, doctors, inventors and changemakers is a critical step in security their future, and our own.

## **CPR & Chain of Survival**

- Each year, 350,000 people in the United States experience an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest; approximately 9 out of 10 die. [Cardiopulmonary resuscitation \(CPR\) and use of an AED](#) if performed immediately, could double or triple a person's chance of survival.
- The American Heart Association is working with states to require schools to have a plan in place if an incident of cardiac arrest were to occur on their campus—whether at an athletic event or at a school facility. A growing number of states nationwide are moving to better prepare schools and school athletic programs to respond to cardiac arrests with the creation of cardiac emergency response plans (CERPS)

- The HEARTS Act, signed into law in December of 2024, is bolstering state efforts by creating a new grant program to provide schools with additional CPR and AED resources.
- With about 49.5 million students enrolled in United States public schools, CPR training as a graduation requirement can put millions of lifesavers into communities year after year.